

**NEW-ARRIVAL-NESS AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT:**

**A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Linguistics

School of Humanities

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University of Adelaide, Australia

March 2010

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on an analysis of the notion of ‘new-arrival-ness’ based on discourses of different dimensions in a New Arrivals Program (NAP). It documents how a group of adult newcomers to Australia was represented, and then constructed, in discourses connected with their English as a Second Language (ESL) class.

The term “new arrivals” is approached as an experiential construct involving social and cultural contingencies. The impetus for the study was underpinned by my firsthand experiences in being positioned as a “new arrival” myself. Although the term “new arrivals” is used with different meanings, it does not refer to all newcomers to Australia. In the context of migrant education, the term refers to a particular subset of newcomers. Using a qualitative case study approach, this study investigated three interrelated aspects of an adult NAP programme: general programme documents, NAP ESL classroom teacher talk and ESL written tasks.

Analysis of the NAP programme documents identified varied meanings for “new arrivals” across federal, state and school levels as well as across educational stages. It also revealed how a deficit model of “new arrivals” was constructed and how such a model represented learners as different from the mainstream norm. The teacher’s in-class talk was dominated by managerial and norm-setting functions. This was an interpretation of learners’ needs. Teacher talk served to codify norms for students to adopt. The norms represented a particular version of Australian culture which learners were expected to take on. Analysis of the NAP writing tasks illustrated how they were organised around the themes of new arrivals and life in Australia, positioning normative value positions and influencing available responses in the final assessment task.

The analysis portrays “new arrivals” and mainstream Australian society in a dialectical relationship, each defined in relation to the other. The study concludes with comments on the implications of this portrayal of programmes for newcomers.

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, when it is accepted for the award of the degree.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Being able to compose this section is an absolute privilege for me. Around this time last year, seeing my thesis printed out was almost unthinkable. Throughout my prolonged journey there were always people assisting me. To cover assistance and contributions I gained from everyone would require a text much longer than this thesis!

In particular, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

Dr Peter Mickan, my principal supervisor. I've come a long way – finally. Since the day I arrived in Adelaide as a new MA student, you have always guided me in academic pursuit with passion and compassion. Being introduced to the concept of social practices has been a fascinating experience. I truly thank you for your years of support and generosity.

Dr Peter White, my co-supervisor. I will never forget the sensations I have had in supervisory sessions with you. There were so many occasions where your comments rescued me from drowning in confusion. I would call this an ultimate academic literacy learning experience. Thank you with my respect and admiration.

Dr Kate Cadman, who taught me that undertaking a PhD is not just an academic pursuit but a relentless engagement with the question of how to approach my life. I wish there were words to adequately express my appreciation to do your support justice.

Professor Richard Russell, the Dean of Graduate Studies. I deeply appreciate your generosity and support in times of difficulty.

Ms Patricia Anderson, the Manager of International Student Centre. My sincere gratitude to your practical assistance and care.

Professor Peter Mühlhäusler and Dr Rob Amery. Thank you for your administrative support and generous workplace arrangements.

My parents, sisters and grandmother, who never ever had any doubt that I would eventually reach where I am now. Your total belief and confidence in me gave me strength in navigating my way through research.

Simon Squillace, another person who has always had total belief in my completion. Thank you for your genuine concern with my well-being.

Ms Candy Gray, my friend, past classmate, colleague, guardian, 'aunty', mentor, English tutor, as well as proof-reader and editor. Many thanks for your various forms of support, understanding and encouragement.

And past and present research colleagues and roommates from the Discipline of Linguistics, including Dr Petter Naessan, Celine Chu, Duc Vo and Udom Srinon. We must continue our philosophical talk on the insights gained from being a PhD student!

Undertaking a doctoral degree has been a life changing experience. What an honour to be able to complete another chapter of my life with a thesis in hand and people to send gratitude to. Thank you all for being there. I now know that even in time of my self-imposed 'solitary confinement', I was never alone.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(Listing the ones used multiple times only)

ABS:	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AMEP:	Adult Migrant English Program
DECS:	Department of Education and Children's Services
DEEWR:	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST:	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETE:	Department of Education Training and Employment
DIAC:	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DIMIA:	Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
EDNs:	Educational Norms
ESL:	English as a Second Language
ESL-NA:	English as a Second Language (New Arrivals Programme)
ESL-GSP:	English as a Second Language (General Support Programme)
NAP:	New Arrivals Program
SACE:	South Australian Certificate of Education
SCNs:	Sociocultural Norms
SFL:	Systemic Functional Linguistics